



SIKH*lens*

20
23

ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT



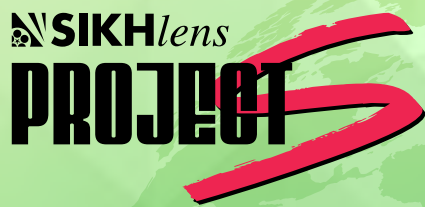


SIKHLens is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that was established over 25 years ago in Southern California. Its founding mission has been to expand mainstream American awareness and understanding of Sikh cultural heritage. This has been achieved by creating greater exposure to Sikh-related films and media. Over the past quarter century, SIKHLens has evolved into a self-sustaining organization with staunch support from both the Sikh community as well as external contributors. SIKHLens programs that have proven impactful for furthering public awareness include **Project S, Destination S, and SIKHLens Digital Voices**. After 9/11 SIKHLens responded by launching a film festival intended to spotlight the Sikh community in order to address the lack of visibility. Additionally, for the past decade SIKHLens has cultivated extensive collaborations with Chapman University, beginning first with cooperative projects through Chapman's renowned Dodge College of Film and Media Arts. This deep university partnership has provided another avenue for advancing the organization's educational mission around Sikh culture and narratives.

SIKHLENS DESTINATION S

Each year the **Destination S** program focuses filming on select global regions using SIKHLens equipment and crews to produce 10-15 diverse films. Currently over twenty Destination S films are in various production stages. Past destinations have spanned the UK, India, Pakistan, Canada, Africa, Nepal, Malaysia, Peru, and Europe. This coming year spotlights the UK, India, Spain, and Switzerland.

Destination S films screened at this year's festival included **American Sikh; Bruce Singh the Lumberjack; The Saviour; Rabab-Strings of Oneness; Connecting the Dots; Sacred Threads in Lima; Breaking Barriers: The Manka Dhingra Story; The Stevia Story; Maa; Hidden Histories-The Sikh Migration Path to Canada; Resilience of Faith; Lord and Lady Singh; Badlaav; and the Community Voices films Basera; Apna Faraz; and Dreams.**





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Dodge College of Film and Media Arts

Through **"Project S,"** Dodge film students travel globally to create 5-7 Sikh-themed films focused on pre-production, filming, and post-production over a credited course taught by Chapman faculty. Past destinations were Thailand, Malawi, the UK, Australia, and France covering topics like a poet, wrestler, blogger, and elected French Sikh official. This January, students will again travel to Thailand.



SAFF 2023 Red Carpet Night at Dodge College, Folina Theater.



CHAPMAN
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Leatherby Libraries

SikhLens partners with Leatherby Libraries to showcase heritage through exhibitions and lectures utilizing their facilities. Our film festival annually launches a 120-day public Sikh exhibit at Leatherby. This year, **"The Art of Japneet Kaur"** is prominently displayed on the first floor. The exhibit will be seen by thousands of students and community members. Exhibits then travel to the Rinker Pharmacy Campus and other institutions, before entering the Library's permanent collections. We continually expand these collections through books, artifacts, and private/antiquarian acquisitions.

The Leatherby Libraries permanently houses the Sikhs and Sikhism in America Study Room where students are surrounded by informative Sikh objects, photos, and resources while studying. Local gurdwaras are displayed with visiting arrangements. This specialized study area resulted from ongoing Sikh initiatives at Chapman.



Vishavjit Singh addresses the audience at SAFF 2023 Patrons Night.

Fish Interfaith Center-Beyond usual activities, in September SikhLens sponsored a 2-day conference with Fish Interfaith Center, Leatherby Libraries and Wilkinson College as part of their **"Leading Health Equity"** series. The first evening featured Harinder Singh lecturing to Sikhs on **"Defending Rights Through Oneness"**. Day 2 had Dr. Angad Singh address Chapman on **"Nurturing Health, Equity With Community"**, Dr. Jasjit Singh discuss **"Furthering Equity from Pediatrics to Mentorship"**, and Dr. Gurpreet Ahuja examine **"Health Equity Challenges and Solutions"**.



Gurpreet Singh interviews Harinder Singh at Day 1 Sikh Conference 2023.

Additionally, our annual Patrons' Dinner returned to Fish Center, previewing the play **"Ithihaas Gwaah Hai"** and Dr. Gurpreet Ahuja speaking on Project Pakistan. In April, Vaisakhi at Fish included speakers Dr. Jasbir S. Kang and Shivpreet Singh.

SIKHLENS: SIKH ARTS AND FILM FESTIVAL

Our 2023 festival occurred November 16-19, spanning Chapman University and The Frida Cinema. Highlighting the Patrons' Dinner were **Vishavjit Singh** on art, diversity, and his new film and **Harjinder Singh** examining AI's impact on libraries and the arts. The Friday Red Carpet featured **"The American Sikh"** premiere and Kavi Raz accepting our Lifetime Achievement Award before screening his film **"Sarabha-Cry for Freedom"**. Over 40 shorts screened over the weekend along with sessions on **Creative Sikhs** and **PDV films**. Feature presentations included **"Sardara & Sons"**, **"Jodi"**, **"Godday Godday Cha"** and **"Land of Gold"**.



SIKHLens-IN-A-BOX

Beyond our November event, we replicate condensed festivals via our **SikhLens-in-a-Box** initiative, bringing content to cities like San Antonio, Davis, Portland, and Tampa plus England and India. Past virtual festivals occurred in Toronto and Seattle during the pandemic. Our model allows any community to host a similar Sikh-focused festival using SikhLens content. This year the festivals were held in Chandigarh in February, London in June, Vancouver in September, and Seattle in December.



SIKHLens DIGITAL VOICE PROGRAM

Entering its 10th year, this program grows youth storytelling abilities using digital media. Online Khan Academy training demonstrates video/film creation fundamentals. Optional in-person workshops are also held in California, England, and India. Over 6000 children have participated to date, producing over 200 films. The program is managed by SikhLens Scholars. Select films screened this year at the SikhLens: Sikh Arts and Film Festival and in Seattle.



SIKHLens COMMUNITY VOICES PROGRAM

Many Sikh organizations lack a digital presence despite doing impactful work. We produce 3-5 films annually about selected nonprofits to share their mission with potential volunteers, funders, and partners. 2023 films featured The Dreams Foundation (**Dreams**); Akal Old Age Home (**Basera**); and Apna Faraz Sewa Society (**Apna Faraz**).



SIKHLens PUBLICATIONS

We began publishing 24 years ago, launching our annual SikhLens Art Calendar at the SikhLens: Sikh Arts and Film Festival. Each calendar highlights a particular artist, subject matter, or museum. It projects a historical or heritage focus through photos and artwork. The 2024 calendar features **The Art of Japneet Kaur** and is distributed free globally. Beyond calendars, we release books like **Jewels from Sikh Wisdom** illustrated by The Singh Twins. 2024 will see **The Legend of 1972** covering Kuldip Singh Bhogal's life and hockey career.



PROJECT PAKISTAN

November's festival featured Pakistan-based films **"Connecting the Dots"** and **"Resilience of Faith"** from Project Pakistan, which previously produced works like **"Knitted Beliefs"** and **"Going Home."** Our **SikhLens Pakistan Heritage Tour** returns for its fourth expedition in February 2024, already fully booked, exploring heritage and culture. A fifth tour is slated for 2025 amidst strong continued interest.



SIKHLens SCHOLAR PROGRAM

We assist Sikh student filmmakers via counseling, admissions support, and encouraging youth through our Digital Voices initiative. This scholar ecosystem focuses on cinema and creative arts, actively recruiting globally.

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Our UK festival sparked new university partners in England. Vancouver's film festival developed a **University of British Columbia** tie. Filming a Denver langar strengthened the **University of Denver** relationship; they may host a 2024 **SikhLens-in-a-Box**. We additionally seek growth in Montreal and Toronto.



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